



COUNCIL MINUTES

September 4, 2008

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on September 4, 2008 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Scott Smith
Alex Finter
Dina Higgins
Dennis Kavanaugh
Dave Richins
Scott Somers

COUNCIL ABSENT

Kyle Jones

OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Debbie Spinner
Linda Crocker

Mayor Smith excused Vice Mayor Jones from the entire meeting.

Mayor Smith expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts and participation in the presentation made by DMB Associates yesterday regarding the future of the Mesa Proving Grounds.

1. Review items on the agenda for the September 8, 2008 Regular Council meeting.

All of the items on the agenda were reviewed among Council and staff and the following was noted:

Conflicts of interest declared: None

Items added to the consent agenda: None

2. Hear a presentation and discuss MAG regional planning activities.

Government Relations Director Scott Butler introduced Dennis Smith, Executive Director of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), and Eric Anderson, MAG Transportation Director.

Mr. Smith thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak regarding transportation issues, the regional perspective and future challenges. He noted that the City of Mesa was a charter member of MAG, and he added that the City of Mesa continues to participate and provide leadership in many areas of the organization. Mr. Smith displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office), and he advised that the MAG budget is driven by Federal and State revenues for transportation. He explained that the State of Arizona has six Councils of Governments (COGs) and five Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and he advised that MAG is designated as a MPO and a Transportation Management Area (TMA).

Mr. Smith emphasized that local governments operate and control MAG by working together to plan for the region. He stated that local officials had the foresight in 1985 to seek a transportation tax to fund the freeway infrastructure, which a recent survey of business leaders determined was the most significant development in the Valley over the past 25 years. Mr. Smith said that Arizona's population of 6 million in 2005 is expected to increase to 16 million by the year 2050. He highlighted the areas within the State that are anticipated to have the fastest rate of growth, such as Maricopa, Pima and Pinal counties. Mr. Smith advised that Arizona will be impacted by a lack of freeways as significant population increases occur in the entire Southwestern United States and Mexico, particularly in those areas bordering and in proximity to the State of Arizona. He noted that two of the fastest metropolitan areas in the country, Las Vegas and Phoenix, are not connected by a freeway.

Mr. Smith displayed maps that provided a comparison of traffic counts for the year 2005 with the projection for 2050 (see Attachment 1). He noted that the estimates for 2050 are based on being able to widen the existing freeways to accommodate the increased traffic, which is not possible for many of the freeways, and therefore alternative solutions need to be identified. Mr. Smith said that although there is considerable discussion regarding the Tucson/Phoenix corridor, congestion presently exists on Interstate 17 north of Phoenix. He advised that the State of Arizona has an opportunity to shape future growth, and he added that global competition requires a good transportation network. Mr. Smith stated that a permanent funding source is necessary in order to maintain the existing infrastructure and address future needs.

Mr. Smith displayed maps of Maricopa County that illustrate the population growth between 1955 and 2000 and maps that project a population of 4.4 million in 2010 increasing to 6.9 million in 2040 (see Attachment 2). He outlined the cooperative effort in the West Valley that successfully developed a transportation plan, and he noted that a Department of Transportation study for the East Valley included Pinal County and other area communities. Mr. Smith advised that no funding source has been identified to address the required infrastructure. He said that Superstition Vistas in the East Valley is a significant area for future development that consists of 275 square miles with a future population of between 270,000 and 900,000. He noted that the area between Tucson, Mesa and Phoenix, formerly known as the Golden Corridor, is now referred to as the Sun Corridor and represents the next big challenge beyond the Regional Transportation Plan. Mr. Smith advised that this corridor represents 35 percent of the State land area and 86 percent of the State's population, and he noted that this "megapolitan" area requires focus in order to succeed in the global economy. He added that the counties of Maricopa, Pima and Pinal are participating in a joint effort to study the needs for this area.

Mr. Smith advised that the present economic problems have intensified the challenge to balance the costs and revenues of the Regional Transportation Plan. He stated that the decennial census figures will impact State-shared revenues, and he noted that lower occupancy rates due to home foreclosures and the difficulties associated with counting the immigrant population pose serious problems. Mr. Smith said that the Region must be competitive with similar regions in the country in order to participate in the global market.

Mr. Anderson continued the presentation by stating that construction of the Gateway Freeway is scheduled to begin in 2016. He reported that since the Regional Transportation Plan was approved in 2003, highway construction costs have increased by 77 percent nationwide

compared to an 18 to 19 percent increase in the Consumer Price Index. He added that the significant decline in current State revenues would affect transportation programs.

Mr. Smith commented that the Region must be aware of global activity. He stated that a deep water port in the Baja is scheduled to be operational in 2014, which could benefit the Region, and he added that the Region must think strategically with regard to the "big picture."

Mayor Smith said that changes in the world have changed our way of thinking, but he stated the opinion that the Region would continue to grow. He said that the Gateway area would provide a "work and live" hub that counteracts urban sprawl. Mayor Smith thanked Mr. Smith and Mr. Anderson for the presentation, and he stated that the City looked forward to continued participation with MAG in the future.

3. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on the Mesa Gateway Strategic Development Plan.

Planning Director John Wesley introduced Deputy Transportation Director Mike James and Mark McLaren, Vice President of HDR, Inc., and Project Manager for the Mesa Gateway Strategic Development Plan. Mr. Wesley displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) and advised that based on input from the Council and the Planning and Zoning Board, staff has prepared revisions to the Plan, made minor adjustments to the vision, consolidated the goals and created general design guidelines. He referred to the goals and objectives (see Attachment 3) and offered to answer any questions.

Councilmember Somers referred to protection of the primary flight path corridors in Goal 1 and noted that although MD80's and larger aircraft represent a high percentage of the flight corridor use, these corridors are also utilized by smaller aircraft and by Boeing for rotor/wing aircraft.

In response to a question from Councilmember Richins, Mr. Wesley advised that the general goals and objectives would be divided into subareas and refined, and he explained that there would be flexibility regarding the use based on the condition that the use serves to accomplish the goals.

Mayor Smith noted that a wide variety of opinions have been expressed regarding the manner in which the airport should be protected. He said that development must be balanced with airport operations, and he added that erring on the side of protecting the airport would be more desirable because the airport is the catalyst for economic development.

City Manager Christopher Brady advised that a framework of specific objectives is being established to provide a performance standard for prospective developers, and he added that the developers would be required to demonstrate the manner in which their proposal meets the performance standards.

Mayor Smith suggested that the burden be placed on the developer to indicate the manner in which the development would affect airport operations, including flight zones, infrastructure, use, etc. He said the City should establish objective standards so that the process for the applicant can be self-regulating. Mayor Smith added that the Council should not be required to consider each small parcel.

Councilmember Somers concurred that the City should maintain a flexible approach regarding the uses around the airport in order to maximize employment opportunities.

Mayor Smith said he was not comfortable with the goal of 100,000 high-wage jobs. He explained that by establishing the proper framework and plan, more than 100,000 jobs could be created.

Mr. Wesley reviewed the goals and key objectives (see Attachment 3).

Responding to questions from Councilmember Richins, Mr. Wesley said that the references to sustainability in the goals relate primarily to the fiscal and financial aspects of sustainability. He added that infrastructure and development must be timed so that development occurs in a manner that pays for ongoing maintenance. Mr. Wesley added that efforts would also be made to attract industries and businesses that create sustainable buildings.

Mayor Smith noted that the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards are becoming the norm. He added that the Gateway planning area has the opportunity to create jobs and to establish a standard that is recognized throughout the world. Mayor Smith suggested that the City consider offering incentives for implementing sustainable development and elevating the objectives for the Gateway area to reflect that standard. He noted that standards have evolved over the past five years to a point where there is connectivity between economic achievement and sustainability.

Mr. Brady said that staff could prepare specific examples of goals that encourage sustainable development and present them for Council consideration.

Mr. Wesley advised that the next steps include reworking the framework of the Plan, expanding the design manual and finalizing the Plan based on feedback from the Policy and Stakeholder Advisory Committees, input received at a public open house and the recommendations of the Planning and Zoning Board after which the Plan would be presented to the Council for approval.

Mr. Wesley explained that the revised framework for the Gateway planning area, which originally consisted of six or seven areas, has been narrowed to four areas. He said that the area immediately northeast of the airport would address the needs of the traveling public and the area south of the airport would be targeted for industrial development. He advised that the northwest section is designated as Urban Mixed Use and the northeast section is designated as Mixed Use Community.

Councilmember Somers noted that the Arizona State University (ASU) Decision Theater modeling indicated that certain parts of the northwest area designated as Urban Mixed Use would experience noise levels in excess of 80 decibels as a result of overflights. He stated the opinion that this would be an area of contention until newer, quieter planes replace the MD80's. Councilmember Somers further stated that the City would have to be very cautious when making land use decisions in this area.

Councilmember Finter said he would like to receive additional information from staff regarding the goal of 100,000 jobs and the manner in which that goal would be accomplished.

Mayor Smith stated that as part of the framework, a mechanism needs to be created which would allow the area to grow organically. He said that the objective and the challenge are to maintain the rights of the property owner today while allowing the area to grow and change over time. Mayor Smith added that the construction yard of today is likely to be a Class A office building thirty years from now.

Mr. Brady commented that the City of Mesa is far behind other communities in the number of jobs per household, and he stated that the focus has to be on job creation and the ability to respond to changing markets.

Mayor Smith stated the opinion that the greatest challenge will be to achieve a balance with the long-term vision when considering individual zoning cases. He said that a framework is required that enables the transition from industrial zoning on various small parcels to flexible zoning concepts that are able to respond to the market over time.

Councilmember Richins noted that other cities, such as Phoenix and Dallas, could provide examples of the manner in which industrial areas have been transitioned to form-based zoning, such as art districts or the conversion of existing buildings into condominiums.

Councilmember Somers stated the opinion that the value of land and opportunities in the areas surrounding the Mesa Proving Grounds would increase because of the presence of high-end development.

Mayor Smith said that there was consensus among the Councilmembers that the goals and objectives indicate progress in the proper direction, and he added that the comments made by the Councilmembers during this meeting should be reflected in the Plan. He commended staff for their ability to "shift gears" and move in a new direction. He reported that the stakeholders and members of the public have expressed appreciation for the fact that their needs and concerns were being addressed in the process.

At 9:17 a.m., Mayor Smith announced that the Council would take a short break. He reconvened the Study Session at 9:29 a.m.

4. Hear a presentation and discuss the proposed Planned Community District for the Mesa Proving Grounds.

Mayor Smith noted that Planning Director John Wesley, Zoning/Civil Hearing Administrator Gordon Sheffield and Special Projects Manager Laura Hyneman were present to address this agenda item.

Mr. Wesley stated that this presentation would provide an overview of the Planned Community District for the Mesa Proving Grounds, and he noted that each member of the Council received a copy of the Community Plan binder (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office). He advised that the Community Plan, which serves as the governing document for the development, is designed to present a majority of the information up front in order to provide more flexibility later in the process. Mr. Wesley explained that once the Community Plan is approved by the Council, no aspect of the project would return for Council consideration unless there is an amendment to or a deviation from the approved Plan.

Mr. Wesley outlined the following sections of the Plan:

- Sections 1 & 2: Introduction and Background
- Section 3: The Vision and Plan for the Property
- Sections 4 – 6: The Regulatory Processes
- Section 7: Land Use Groups
- Sections 8 – 18: General and Engineering Design Standards; Definitions

Mr. Wesley referred to Section 7 and advised that the Land Use Groups are the zoning categories for the property. He advised that this proposal moves from a Euclidean “use-based” approach to a more “form-based” approach.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Higgins, Mr. Wesley said that an applicant would have to demonstrate to staff or the Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Board that a development is consistent with the Community Plan design standards and criteria.

Mayor Smith noted that the Community Plan provides a graphic example of the desired architectural standard rather than relying on verbiage to describe the standard.

Mr. Wesley advised that consideration has been given to the manner in which a property could evolve over time, and he cited an example of a parking lot that is designed to provide the potential for the future development of the property as an office building. He explained that basic minimum standards in the urban core could evolve over time.

In response to a question from Councilmember Higgins, Mr. Wesley provided an explanation of the various types of zoning:

Euclidean:	Zoning that resulted from a 1926 court case which approved the concept of defined zoning districts in Euclid, Ohio based on use; i.e., commercial, industrial, residential, etc.
Form-based:	Zoning that concentrates on the form of the buildings and their relationship to each other rather than the use that occurs within each building.
Organic:	Zoning that evolves and adjusts over time.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Richins, Mr. Wesley confirmed that DMB has made a commitment in Section 3 of the Plan to install infrastructure that addresses the highest possible use of the property as the development evolves over time so that retrofits would not be necessary in the future.

Mr. Wesley noted that Section 8 of the Community Plan includes guidelines for urban design. He added that numerous pictures are included throughout the document to illustrate the types of uses. Mr. Wesley stated that the land use budget appears in Section 4 and descriptions of the land use districts are found in Section 8.

Mr. Brady suggested that the Council bring their binders to the next Study Session at which staff will provide additional information on the Community Plan.

Mr. Wesley explained that since DMB submitted the Community Plan document last week, staff has been in the process of making minor changes and adjustments. He stated that P&Z would be reviewing the Plan this evening.

Mr. Brady noted that the Community Plan, including the minor changes and adjustments, is the document that will be presented to the Council for approval.

Mayor Smith explained that following Council approval of the Plan, the process to approve an individual project would become an administrative function. He thanked Mr. Wesley and staff for the presentation.

5. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on procedures for Council Committees.

This item was continued to a future Study Session.

6. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

There were no reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

7. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Christopher Brady stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Monday, September 8, 2008, 3:30 p.m. – Transportation & Infrastructure Committee

Monday, September 8, 2008, TBA – Enterprise Zone Commission Meeting

Monday, September 8, 2008, TBA – Study Session

Monday, September 8, 2008, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Thursday, September 11, 2008, 8:30 a.m. – ASU Polytechnic Building Opening

Thursday, September 11, 2008, 10:00 a.m. – 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony

Thursday, September 11, 2008, 10:30 a.m. – Study Session

8. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

9. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 9:46 a.m.

SCOTT SMITH, MAYOR

ATTEST:

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 4th day of September 2008. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK

baa

Attachments (3)